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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

All media reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu, PA President Mahmoud Abbas, and President Barack Obama will meet this week, despite U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell's failure to put

together a package that would enable the launching of full-blown negotiations between the sides. (YediotQs banner sums up the situation: QThere Is a Summit, But No Expectations.Q) In a surprise announcement, the White House said on Saturday night that the three would meet on Tuesday, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York. The meeting - the first time Netanyahu will meet with Abbas since becoming prime minister in March - will take place immediately after Obama holds separate sessions earlier with Netanyahu and Abbas. The meeting will take place even though Netanyahu did not announce a total settlement freeze, a condition the Palestinians had set for the talks. The Jerusalem Post said that the summit will take place at a particularly important time for Obama, who is keen -- according to observers in Jerusalem -- to go to the U.N. General Assembly and the G-20 meeting of the heads of the world's leading economies with an achievement, rather than a stalemate, in the Middle East diplomatic process. According to those assessments, once Obama invited the parties to talks, neither could refuse. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials as saying that Jerusalem was not surprised by the invitation. HaQaretz quoted a senior source at the PMQs bureau as saying yesterday that the Palestinians were the ones who "folded" after they refused a meeting with Netanyahu. "They made militant statements but in the end they will come," the source was quoted as saying. However, HaQaretz reported that sources at the PM's bureau acknowledged that the meeting is expected to only be a photo opportunity and will not lead to a resumption of the peace process.

The media quoted Netanyahu associates as saying that the PM will deliver a QdramaticQ speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday. Maariv assumes that his address will focus on the Iranian nuclear threat, the Goldstone report, and the peace process.

Leading media reported that the IDF and the U.S. militaryQs European Command are about to hold a joint missile defense exercise -- the biennial Juniper Cobra.

Leading media reported that the U.S. is increasingly viewing the Goldstone report on Operation Cast Lead as one-sided. Statements by State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly and the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Susan Rice, are cited.

The media quoted Russian President Dmitry Medvedev as saying in an interview with CNN that was released yesterday that President Shimon Peres told him in Sochi in August that Israel would not launch an attack on Iran. Medvedev described such an attack as "the worst thing that can be imagined." Leading media reported that Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, has advised President Obama to order Israeli planes to be shot down if they are found to be flying over Iraqi airspace on their way to attack targets in Iran.

The media reported that over the weekend two rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza and that yesterday IDF troops killed two Palestinians who allegedly tried to place a charge along the border.

The Jerusalem Post reported that leading Democratic and Republican congressmen expressed outrage following a report in MondayQs Jerusalem Post that Saudi Arabia has been violating its promise to Washington to stop enforcing the Arab League boycott of Israel.

Media cited the Swedish Government as saying that the newspaper Aftenposten did not violate the law when it published a report on organ-harvesting by the IDF.

Maariv printed the results of a survey conducted among the Kurdish population of northern Iraq by a polling institute in Irbil:

- Are there historical relations between the Kurdish leadership and Israel? Yes: 87.5%; no: 2.6%; undecided: 9.9%.
- Do relations with Israel have a role in accelerating the establishment of a Kurdish state? Yes: 66.9%; no: 11.8%; undecided: 21.3%.
- Is it preferable for relations between Kurds and Israel to remain secret? No: 60.4%; yes: 21.3%; undecided: 18.3%.

11. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. "Why? Obama"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/21): QThis is not a meeting, not even half a meeting. The event that will be held tomorrow in New York is a joke at the expense of an American president, who dabbled in Middle East politics and suffered the consequences.... The Americans discovered that they wanted an Israeli-Palestinian agreement more than the leaders of the two sides wanted it. This is the tragedy of the two peoples: Both Netanyahu and Abu Mazen prefer to live at the moment with the current situation, rather than risk making decisions that will exact a heavy political toll from both of them. Neither of them is Ben-Gurion, Begin or Rabin. They are leaders who think

small. When a U.S. president encounters such a brick wall, he has two options: Either distance himself from the sick bed (this is what Bush did throughout most of his term); or try to impose his opinion (this is what Carter did, and what Clinton tried to do). Obama did not choose the first option or the second option. He could have let Netanyahu and the Arab leaders, including Abu Mazen, sweat. They are all dependent on the United States, its money, its defense aid, its action against Iran. But instead of letting them sweat, the one who perspired was Mitchell. He also didn't try to impose his opinion. He read the polls, which showed a drastic drop in the confidence he enjoyed in Israeli public opinion and in Jewish public opinion in the U.S. He could have appealed to public opinion in Israel over Netanyahu's head. Repeated discussions were held on this in the White House, but no decision was made. The Israelis, who for 16 years were pampered by affectionate presidents in the White House, did not receive from Obama the love to which they had become addicted. True, he sent a greeting for the Jewish New Year. But he sent a similar greeting to the Iranians. He is cool. There is great charm in his cool, his self-control, and his easygoing manner. But the U.S. President is not Brad Pitt or George Clooney. He is supposed to bring results.

II. "The Abu Mazen Riddle"

Veteran journalist and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (9/21): QIt is true that the Netanyahu-Mitchell talks did not lead to a full understanding, but the differences of opinion that remained were mere trivialities. Everything was ready to be finalized, except for Abu Mazen. The man who has adopted the habit of thwarting at the last moment any final agreement -- remained true to form. He heard about the understandings that were close to an agreement on the Netanyahu-Mitchell axis, and instead of a substantive answer left for a round of talks in Jordan and Egypt, and after making aggressive statements, surprisingly consented to a three-way summit without any construction freeze.... If the high-echelon meeting in New York leads to a continuation -- then the political negotiations have extricated themselves from the unnecessary condition of a construction freeze, as a factor delaying the very discussions on the content of the final status arrangement; and if after tomorrow's conversation, the negotiations continue to tread water where they have stopped since Obama and Netanyahu came to power in their respective countries -- then an important gesture has been made for nothing. Is Abu Mazen interested in real negotiations? It is not only his conduct at Camp David in 2000 and on the Jerusalem-Ramallah axis in 2008 that raises questions and surprise, but the question also arises whether he believes that without the authority to represent Gaza as well, he actually has no mandate from his people. The curtain will rise tomorrow, and we will start to know.

III. "Netanyahu's Courage"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (9/21): QTrue to the tradition of lowering expectations, the White House announced the purpose of the meeting between the three leaders [Obama, Netanyahu, and Abbas] will be to Qlay the groundwork for renewed negotiationsQ on Middle East peace.... On the eve of the Jewish New Year, Netanyahu called on Abbas to Qshow courageQ and explain to his people that the conflict must end, and with it Palestinian claims on

Israel. The Prime Minister must demand the same of himself. He, too, must show courage and tell his people, his party, and his political partners that a peace agreement on the basis of dividing the land into two countries is distinctly in Israel's interest, and that securing that interest would require Israel to pull back from most of the territory it occupied in 1967 and to dismantle most settlements. Netanyahu's support for a demilitarized Palestinian state was an important move, but was not enough. As long as he makes demands of the other side, while being ambiguous about his own level of flexibility and commitment to opinions he has voiced in the past, he will perhaps be able to hang on to his seat, but will steer the country down a dead end. Now it is Netanyahu's turn to show courage and achieve a breakthrough for a settlement with the Palestinians. This is his mission.

IV. "Warning, Summit Ahead"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (9/21): QThe summit's success will not be measured by the extent of the settlement freeze Obama obtains from Netanyahu. Even the Palestinians recognize that a few hundred more homes in Ma'aleh Adumim or Pisgat Ze'ev will not make a difference in a long-term solution of the conflict. For the summit to avoid becoming another forgettable footnote in the history of the peace process, the participants must return home with a full translation of the slogans voiced in Cairo by Obama into the language of action. Obama doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. All he needs is to update the Roadmap timetable, which long ago became U.N. Security Council Resolution 1515. The Roadmap says that in 2005 the parties will reach a permanent solution that will end the occupation that began in 1967. It also says the agreement will include a negotiated settlement on the status of Jerusalem and an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue. Two Israeli prime ministers, Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, negotiated with the Palestinians on all these issues and even reached some understandings. As President Shimon Peres (who is now pushing the two sides to deal, as a first stage, only with the issue of borders) says, you can make an omelet with eggs but no one can make eggs out of an omelet.

IV. QAbbas Has Most to Lose

Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote on page one of HaQaretz (9/21): QThe summit serves, first and foremost, to provide the Obama administration with a much sought photo-op.... Still, it's hard not to wonder about the manner in which the U.S. administration (and even more so Abbas himself) conducted itself over the past few weeks. Abbas stands to lose most from the summit. He stressed to the Palestinian public at every opportunity that there is little point to a tripartite summit before there's an agreement on a construction freeze, especially in East Jerusalem.... The hands of the U.S. administration are not particularly clean. The State Department envoys assured the Palestinians that Washington was on their side this time, and was not going to yield to the Israelis. Only in the last few weeks did Abbas's people in [his headquarters] the Mugata find out the White House was, in fact, very understanding of the Israeli demand not to freeze construction in the settlements altogether, and to leave Jerusalem out of the debate. Abbas was apparently prepared to forgo his dignity rather than replace Netanyahu as the bad boy in the peace process. He understands that no political bounty is likely to come out of the meeting, and that he himself is undertaking a considerable risk.

VI. QThe Stumbling Block of that Arab Initiative

Shlomo Avineri, Hebrew University Professor of Political Science and former director-general of the Foreign Ministry, wrote in Ha'aretz (9/21): QIn the wake of a September 12 op-ed in the New York Times by Prince Turki al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia, it seems possible to decide which of these interpretations is valid. The prince is in great part the moving spirit behind the Arab initiative.... He ... represents the moderate Saudi view.... There is no ambiguity: The settlements are not open to negotiation; Israel must evacuate them first. Turki al-Faisal adds that while all of Israel's neighbors would like peace, QThey cannot be expected to tolerate what amounts to theft, and certainly should not be pressured into rewarding Israel for the return of land that does not belong to it.Q It may be possible to ignore the rhetoric (Qwhat amounts to theftQ), but

the message is clear: The Arab initiative does not speak of negotiations. It demands that Israel first withdraw from all the territories (including East Jerusalem) -- involving the evacuation of more than a quarter million Israelis -- and only then will negotiations on the normalization of relations and on the refugees begin. This is truly not a serious proposal. It does not matter how peace-hungry Israelis interpret the Arab initiative. We have been given an authorized interpretation by one of the people behind it. The initiative should not be ignored, because it includes an Arab declaration of willingness for peace, but its meaning should not be mistaken. At this stage it is not calling for negotiations, but rather unconditional acceptance of the Arab position, and that is also its main stumbling block.

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

"All Reports Lead to Tehran"

Columnist Boaz Bismuth, who was Israel's Ambassador to Mauritania between 2004 and 2008, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (9/21):
Iran, not Afghanistan, now is at the focus of the international community's interest -- a fact that is not by itself negative as far as Israel is concerned.... On September 24 the Security Council will discuss imposing stricter sanctions on Iran. On Wednesday, Obama is supposed to address the General Assembly for the first time -- before Ahmadinejad. They are not supposed to shake hands (it should be hoped.) Confused? It looks like we all are.

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